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Vietnam Intelligence Chief Was Unaware of Concerns

By M. A. FARBER

A former head of military intelligence in South Vietnam testified yesterday that none of the officers who later complained about being encouraged to lower their estimates of enemy strength had brought their concerns to him.

Some of these officers voiced their complaints in a 1982 CBS Reports documentary that is now the subject of a \$120 million libel suit by Gen. William C. Westmoreland, who commanded American forces in Vietnam from 1964 to 1967.

The witness, Lieut. Gen. Phillip B. Davidson Jr., now retired, said in Federal Court in Manhattan that he participated in a number of meetings in Saigon in September 1967 that focused on the size and nature of the enemy.

The Saigon meetings — also attended by representatives of the Central Intelligence Agency, the Defense Intelligence Agency, the State Department and the Pacific Command — were convened to determine figures for North Vietnamese and Vietcong troop strength that could be used in the military's order of battle and in a special national intelligence estimate for President Johnson.

The order of battle is the official military listing of enemy strength.

Denies Complaints From Officers

Dan M. Burt, General Westmoreland's lawyer, asked General Davidson yesterday whether any of the officers in General Westmoreland's command

had complained to him at the time that the figures they advanced at the meetings were "improper."

"No," General Davidson said.

Q. Did anyone from MACV [Military Assistance Command, Vietnam] object to the figures used by the command?

A. The answer is no.

On the CBS documentary, titled "The Uncounted Enemy: A Vietnam Deception," the narrator, Mike Wallace, said that General Westmoreland's intelligence officers "had been instructed to argue for estimates far lower than they believed to be true."

Told C.I.A. Figures Were Low

Col. Gains Hawkins, chief of General Davidson's order of battle section, said on the broadcast that he had told a C.I.A. intelligence analyst at a session preceding the Saigon meetings "that I thought our figures were lower than they actually should be."

Colonel Hawkins said he concluded after briefings with General Westmoreland and others the previous May that enemy strength figures were to be kept down.

"That was the message," he said on the broadcast.

Col. George Hamscher, an intelligence officer from the Pacific Command in Hawaii, headed by Adm. Ulysses S. Grant Sharp, said on the program that "the message we got" was to hold the figures below a total of 300,000.

Mr. Wallace used Colonel Hamscher's remarks to support his own statement on the broadcast that "CBS Reports has learned that Colonel Hawkins was in fact carrying out orders that originated from General Westmoreland."

Unedited Interview Played

Yesterday, however, Mr. Burt played for the jury the unedited videotape that CBS had made of its inter-

view with Colonel Hawkins, who is expected to testify for the network.

On the tape — but not on the program — Colonel Hawkins said that neither General Westmoreland nor anyone else had instructed him to stay below an enemy strength total of 300,000 at the sessions with the C.I.A. and other agencies.

"I deduced it," Colonel Hawkins said in the taped interview. "And I defended it willingly. I was not given any specific orders."

Colonel Hawkins told George Crile, the program's producer, that he was "no virgin."

"I've been down a lot of roads," he said. "It was a bad moment."

At another point in the videotape that was not shown on the program, Colonel Hawkins said he had not worried about the legality of reducing figures in what he regarded as an arbitrary fashion.

"When it comes right down to it," he said, "who the hell can prove what figure is better than the other figure. You don't have that two plus two equals four in this business."

Colonel Hawkins also said that the figures for the enemy's regular, uniformed troops — as opposed to such forces as its "home guard" — were "not touched." The former figures, he said, were "inviolate."